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Boudreau, Paul E

To: Burger, David
Subject: RE: Reuters 4/13/06 article on planned Europarlament visit to Macedonia re alleged detentions, renditions

RELEASED IN FULL

From: Orlansky, Michael D
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2006 12:28 PM
To: Skopje Front Office; Hubler, Stephen A
Subject: Reuters 4/13/06 article on planned Europarlament visit to Macedonia re alleged detentions, renditions

A recent Reuters article makes reference to a European Parliament committee visit to Macedonia later this month.

April 13, 2006

Crunch Weeks Ahead for Europe's CIA Probes

By REUTERS

Filed at 9:45 a.m. ET

BERLIN (Reuters) - After months without a breakthrough, European investigators probing alleged CIA abuses in the war on terrorism are starting to sound more hopeful and will seek new evidence in the next few weeks.

A Washington Post report last November that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had run secret prisons in Eastern Europe for al Qaeda suspects unleashed a spate of investigations which have so far failed to produce a "smoking gun."

But after several months when the issue largely faded from view, two developments in the past eight days have generated new headlines.

First Amnesty International detailed the case of three Yemeni men who were held for 13 months until May 2005 at a secret U.S. facility, possibly in Eastern Europe.

Then the Council of Europe, a human rights organization, said on Wednesday at least one European state had admitted to handing over terrorism suspects to foreign agents.

"We have received official acknowledgement of 'handing over' individuals to foreign officials" in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, Council head Terry Davis said, declining to name the country involved.

He may have been referring to Sweden, where a parliamentary ombudsman has criticized the security services over the expulsion of two Egyptian terrorism suspects who were handed over to U.S. agents and flown home aboard a U.S. government-leased plane in 2001. Human Rights Watch has said there is credible evidence they were later tortured.

The Swedish government declined this week to comment, but opposition lawmaker Cecilia Wikstrom told

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Reuters: "I would put some money on Sweden. I would not be surprised if it's Sweden that he (Davis) meant."

Sarah Ludford, a British Liberal Democrat member of a European Parliament committee investigating CIA prisons and secret flights across Europe, agreed Sweden was an obvious possibility but it would be "intriguing" if Davis was on to something new.

KEEP UP THE PRESSURE

Ludford said the parliament committee was making some headway and she expected its interim draft report next month to say there were strong grounds to probe deeper.

"We'll say there is enough material to go on investigating and to keep up the pressure," she told Reuters.

"We've got this vast jigsaw and we're filling in bits of the jigsaw ... I think we're making a few people a bit nervous."

The committee will send a delegation in late April to Macedonia, where German citizen Khaled el-Masri was arrested on December 31, 2003, and from where he was flown to Afghanistan and held for months as a terrorist suspect by the United States. Masri, later freed without charge and dumped without explanation in Albania, is now suing the former head of the CIA.

Another group of Euro-MPs will head to Washington in early May, seeking meetings with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and CIA chief Porter Goss.

Meanwhile a German parliamentary inquiry will start work on May 11, examining among other things the Masri case, the CIA prison allegations and the use of German airports for dozens of unexplained CIA flights.

Critics suspect some of these may have been used by the United States to transport terrorist suspects, outside proper legal channels, to countries where they would face torture. Washington acknowledges it has used secret transfers, known as renditions, but denies "outsourcing torture."

Opposition Free Democrat member of parliament Max Stadler told Reuters the German inquiry would probably seek to question Council of Europe chief Davis and his special investigator, Dick Marty, who has said he suspects European governments or their intelligence services were aware of CIA abuses.

Euro-MP Ludford said that even if investigations to date had not produced conclusive proof of such abuses, they had thrown up enough strong circumstantial evidence to force governments to provide answers, and to take steps to stop any repetition.

"We have got to the point of reversing the burden of proof," she said. "The ball is in the court of the governments ... They have to prove now that they were not involved in illegal rendition."

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